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TEACHER INSTRUCTIONAL LANGUAGE AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE  
IN MIDDLE SCHOOL CHORAL REHEARSALS (*REVISED*)

Patrick K. Freer

This study was designed to add to the knowledge base concerning the experience of middle school students during choral rehearsals in anticipation of implications for how choral teachers might positively influence the persistence of choral singers throughout adolescence. Researchers have periodically surveyed the literature about choral music education to determine trends, draw conclusions, and make recommendations to the field (Modisett, 1955; Gonzo, 1973; Hylton, 1983; Grant & Drafall, 1991; Grant & Norris, 1998). In each instance, the researchers have indicated a general lack of research concerning the relationship between teacher instructional behaviors and student learning or attitudes. This relationship has received little attention at the middle school level, although researchers have examined several areas of conductor behaviors, including repertoire choice (Funderburk-Galvan, 1988), approval and disapproval comments (Derby, 2001; Walker, 1990; Taylor, 1997; Fiocca, 1989), and the organization of rehearsal time (Copley, 1990).

Key components of the relationship between teacher instruction and student learning can be found within patterns of instructional discourse. A common format of instructional discourse in adolescent classrooms follows a basic sequence of recitation: the teacher issues an academic question or prompt, a student responds, and the teacher evaluates the answer (see Jackson & Davis, 2000; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1990). This format is similar to early models of what have become known as “sequential patterns of music instruction” (Price, 1983) as well as the Initiation-Response-Evaluation (I-R-E) model (Mehan, 1985). The sequential language patterns of music teachers can support students as they take control of their learning in constructivist

environments, particularly when the teacher language affirms student progress and encourages autonomy (Gallimore & Tharp, 1990). This type of support is often termed “scaffolding,” and is associated with social constructivism (see Wiggins, 2001) and the work of Vygotsky (1978).

Social constructivism focuses on the learning partnerships that exist between individual students, groups of students, and their teachers. Within these partnerships, learning occurs when a student accepts a new, higher level of challenge than previously presented. Adults have recalled that many of their most influential adolescent experiences occurred in classrooms where teachers tailored academic challenges to the skills of their students (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde & Wahlen, 1993). Social constructivism and scaffolding are not limited to partnerships between teachers and students. Peer dialogue, modeling and observation are also essential components of influential classroom learning experiences.

Csikszentmihalyi’s flow theory (1990) defines concomitants of these types of influential experiences and is supported by research in music education (e.g. Bloom & Skutnick-Henley, 2005; Custodero, 2002; O’Neill, 1999). According to flow theory, individuals are intrinsically motivated to find experiences characterized by high levels of both perceived challenge and perceived skill, a clarity of goals, deep personal involvement and concentration, self-directedness, self-awareness, the receiving of immediate feedback, and a lack of awareness concerning time constraints. When in these situations, people experience a state of flow while the loss of these conditions disrupts the flow experience. Analysis indicates that an individual’s perceptions of challenge and skill are the strongest markers of the quality of experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Accordingly, the quality of experience has four primary designations: flow (both challenge and skill levels are high), apathy (both challenge and skill levels are low), anxiety (challenge exceeds skill), and boredom (skill exceeds challenge).

In a study relating teacher discourse and student experience in mathematics, researchers used Csikszentmihalyi's designations of flow, apathy, anxiety and boredom to describe the quality of student experience during instruction (Turner, Meyer, Cox, Logan, DiCintio & Thomas, 1998). These complex relationships between teacher instructional behavior and the quality of student experience have not been widely examined within choral music education at the middle school level. The purpose of this study was to investigate how the instructional language of choral conductors affects the quality of perceived student experience in middle school choral ensembles.

It should be noted that this study was conducted in the United States, and music education in the participating schools, as in many middle schools, occurred entirely within large-group performance ensembles. These ensembles met regularly during the academic day and were considered academic subjects rather than extra-curricular activities. Middle schools in the United States typically require students to enroll in at least one arts course, and students are often forced to choose between multiple course offerings including band, chorus, visual art, etc. Though the primary U.S. music education association (MENC) and many state education departments strongly endorse voluntary national standards encompassing performance, production, critique and history/culture, the prevailing performance orientation of school music programs requires teachers to make decisions about non-performance course content relative to the voluntary standards. The instructional language examined for this study was limited to that which occurred within lessons focused on the rehearsal and performance of choral music.

### *Method*

The primary participants in this study were drawn from four non-auditioned mixed choral ensembles in two middle schools (one seventh grade and one eighth grade in each) in a suburban location in the northeastern United States. The school district encompassed 17 schools, including four middle schools and two high schools. The two middle schools participating in this study sent their graduating students to different high schools.

The schools were selected for this study because they typified the economic and ethno-cultural characteristics of the broader geographic region. Middle school “A” (corresponding to this study’s designation of Teacher A) served 807 students in grades six through eight. English was the primary language of 67% of the school population, with 9% speaking Spanish, and 5% speaking Gujarati. Other individual languages were spoken by no more than 2% of the students. There were Middle school “B” (Teacher B) served 775 students in grades six through eight. English was the primary language of 56% of the student population, 11% spoke Gujarati, 9% spoke Mandarin, and many other languages were spoken by smaller numbers of students.

Five 40-minute consecutive rehearsals of each choir were videotaped and audio taped in their entirety. At the conclusion of each observation, the student participants (88 total) contributed a self-report (Appendix A) modeled on the Experience Sampling Form (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1987; Turner et al., 1998). Exit interview data was collected from the two teachers and the district supervisor according to an active interview protocol (Holstein, 1995). Teacher A had two years of teaching experience; Teacher B had fourteen years of experience.

The mixed model research design (Scholz, 2002; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998) was initially focused on quantitative analyses and the correlation of instructional discourse and

student experience. This was then coupled with qualitative analysis of classroom context, teacher interviews, non-verbal instructional procedures, student behaviors and field notes.

Instructional discourse was defined as any words spoken by a teacher within a rehearsal (Reed & Schallert, 1993), with the exclusion of announcements and extended logistical directions.

Instructional discourse was categorized according to scaffolding and non-scaffolding language, modified from Turner et al. (1998) as shown in Table 1; and complete sequential units of instruction as defined by Hendel (1995) containing the teacher presentation of an academic or musical task, student interaction with the task and/or the teacher, and, most importantly, teacher feedback related to the task. An experienced transcriber and coder assisted with the discourse analysis as a peer reviewer. All transcripts were initially prepared using a standard word-processing program and were subsequently transferred to the NUD\*IST (version N4 “classic”) data analysis program for coding and retrieval.

Table 1 Here
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Student experience was examined using an established variant of the Experience Sampling Method (e.g. Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2001). Students completed self-reports ( $n = 381$ ) of various components of affect and motivation, and the composite reports for each rehearsal were labeled as experiences of apathy, boredom, flow, or anxiety (Turner et al., 1998). These self-report forms contained 15 forced-choice items beginning with 12 semantic differential items (alert-sleepy, happy-sad, cheerful-crabby, strong-weak, involved-uninvolved, proud-ashamed, part of the group-lonely, excited-bored, open-closed, clear-confused, relaxed-uptight, cooperative-competitive); these were scored on a nine-point scale, as was an item measuring intrinsic motivation, “Do you wish you had been doing something else?” The final two items

measured student perceptions of the rehearsal's challenges relative to their personal skill levels (ten point scale). The self-report form is shown in Appendix A.

### *The Quantitative Data*

The data collected for this study represented both quantitative and qualitative types. The three types of quantitative data are reported in this section, including descriptive statistics concerning the scaffolding and non-scaffolding language of teachers, the teachers' use of sequential instructional units, and the students' self-reports of experience during the observed rehearsals.

#### *Scaffolding and Non-Scaffolding Language*

Each of the teacher instructional discourse events was assigned a code referring to categories of scaffolding language or non-scaffolding language (Table 2). The lowest percentage of scaffolding language use occurred in the five observations of Teacher A's eighth grade (0.00% to 3.99%); scaffolding language with her seventh grade ranged from 1.47% to 6.32%. The highest percentage of scaffolding language use occurred in the five observations of Teacher B's seventh grade (36.91% to 50.00%); scaffolding use with her eighth grade ranged from 24.49% to 33.07%.

Table 2 Here
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These choral teachers needed to be very specific in their language if each of the multiple sections within the ensemble (soprano, alto, tenor, baritone, etc.) were to stop, start, and otherwise rehearse in an efficient, expedient manner. A frequent teacher directive during these

rehearsals was a command for students to sing a particular pitch. The three statements below all direct students to sing a note, but they were assigned to different subcategories as described.

a. “Sing this note” (Procedures; Logistical)

This is a simple directive statement that does not draw on any prior student knowledge or skill.

b. “Sing me a G” (Transfer of Responsibility)

To respond, students need to call upon their own sense of relative pitch and relate that to the requested pitch of G. This teacher builds toward the development of relative pitch in each rehearsal, most commonly by requesting that students sing a C and then comparing the student response with the correct pitch. In this case, the teacher builds on the developing awareness of pitch by asking students to sing a G. Students are required to relate their knowledge of the pitch C to the requested pitch of G. The responsibility for locating that specific pitch has been given to the students.

c. “Here’s a C, now sing me a G” (Negotiation)

The teacher assists the students by giving them a C as a point of reference. The teacher is acting as a partner with the students by giving them enough assistance to be successful but not explicitly providing the correct answer.

*Scaffolding Language and Complete Sequential Units of Instruction*

Complete sequential units of instruction were found in all rehearsals. Both of Teacher A’s classes experienced a similar percentage of total instructional language within complete



sequential units (15.09% for grade 7 and 12.44% for grade 8), while there was a large difference in the percentage of total instructional language within complete sequential units between the two classes of Teacher B (67.86% for grade 7 and 37.66% for grade 8). Overall, complete sequential units occupied a greater percentage of instructional discourse in grade 7 (44%) than grade 8 (24%). The five rehearsals highest in total percentage use of scaffolding language (Teacher B's seventh grade) also contained the greatest amount of instructional language within complete sequential units; 79.07% of these complete sequential units contained scaffolding language. Teacher use of scaffolding language during complete sequential units is detailed in Table 3.

Table 3 Here
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Two examples of complete sequential units of instruction are shown below, one using non-scaffolding language and another using scaffolding language. The first represents a complete unit as it contains the teacher presentation of a musical task, student singing in response to that task, and then teacher reinforcement/feedback that is specific to the requested task. The language used in this example belongs to the non-scaffolding subcategory of I-R-E (Initiation-Response-Evaluation).

Presentation:	Add a bigger breath and support that sound. Ready, and...
Response:	(students sing an ascending scale)
Reinforcement:	No, do that again. You're not taking a deep enough breath.

The second excerpt is an example of how scaffolding language can be used within a complete sequential unit of instruction. The concept is the same as in the previous example, yet the reinforcement statements belong to the scaffolding subcategory of task-focused support.

Presentation:	Now, sigh on "ooh," but much higher than me. You
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can do it!

Response: (students sing with a descending “ooh” sigh; have difficulty phonating on high beginning pitch)

Reinforcement: You know what? That was strange! Let’s try that again and see what we can do to make it better. Let’s raise our arms up as we breathe in, and then follow your arms with your voice as you bring your arms down. Put your arms all the way up, then all the way down and follow with your voice. Ready?

Modes of teacher and student behavior were noted for each component of the complete sequential units of instruction. Over 70% of the teacher presentations contained specific instructional content about the requested task while the others contained only directions for students to perform a task. Seventh grade classes of both teachers were directed toward specific academic or musical content in 75% of task presentations. Specific academic or musical instructional content was more prevalent in task presentations to eighth graders of Teacher B (72%) than Teacher A (46%). Musical performance was the mode of student response in 69% of the complete sequential units. The percentage of student responses that included musical performance was similar for grades seven (71%) and eight (65%), with the highest percentage in the seventh grade classes of Teacher B (74%). Non-verbal responses were infrequent throughout. Teacher approval comments during the reinforcement component were higher in grade seven (84% total) than in grade eight (56% total). The overall ratio of approval to disapproval comments during the reinforcement component of complete sequential units was 74:26.

As indicated in Figure 1, there was a strong correlation between the percentage of scaffolding language used and the percentage of complete sequential units of instruction

employed in the observed rehearsals ( $\% \text{ sequential units} = 6.49 + 1.22 \times \% \text{ scaffolding}$ ;  $r^2 = .85$ ).

Each marker represents one rehearsal.

Figure 1 Here

### *Student Experience*

Mean ratings for students of Teacher A were lower than those for Teacher B on thirteen of the fifteen items on the student self-report form. The exceptions were for the ratings of “open” and “relaxed.” The item asking student to indicate whether they were “open” or “closed” generated a mean of 5.61 ( $SD$  2.09) for Teacher A and 5.50 ( $SD$  2.11) for Teacher B on the 10-point scale (scored 0-9). The means for “relaxed/uptight” for Teacher A were .07 higher than those for Teacher B. Seventh grade means were higher than those of eighth grade respondents on all fifteen items. There was no appreciable difference between the responses of girls and the responses of boys.

Compared to the overall mean ratings (10-point scale scored 0-9) for challenge (4.24,  $SD$  2.27) and skill (5.73,  $SD$  2.33), Teacher B’s seventh graders reported high and matched levels of challenge and skill during each of the five rehearsals, resulting in a quality of experience designation of “flow.” The students in all eighth grade rehearsals of Teacher A reported low levels of both challenge and skill (apathy). The other quality of experience designations were evident in the five composite self-reports from Teacher A’s seventh grade (four “boredom,” one “anxiety”) and Teacher B’s eighth grade (one “boredom” and four “anxiety”). The distribution of the four experience categories was not affected by other methods of calculation. For example, instead of comparing the means for a given rehearsal with the means for the total study, the means for each rehearsal were compared with the means for the class, the teacher, and the grade. In all cases, the proportion of rehearsals in each category of experience was similar.

Comparisons were made between the level of scaffolding language in each rehearsal and the student quality of experience (Table 4). The seventh grade rehearsals of Teacher B were each characterized by a composite student experience of flow *and* high levels of teacher scaffolding language. The eighth grade rehearsals of Teacher A were each characterized by a composite student experience of apathy *and* low levels of teacher scaffolding language. Overall student experiences of boredom and anxiety occurred in classrooms characterized by low and middle levels of teacher scaffolding language.

Table 4 Here
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#### *Relationships Between the Three Types of Quantitative Data*

Correlation, factor and reliability analyses were conducted to determine relationships between the individual student response items designed to indicate level of affect (the first 12 items on the self-report form). Using a Pearson Correlation, correlations for all items were significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Factor analysis using the extraction method of principal component analysis showed that one factor was dominant. Reliability for a single scale containing these 12 items, labeled “affect,” was calculated at  $\alpha = 0.92$ . Rehearsals high in scaffolding language generated a mean student affect rating of 6.40 (9-point scale scored 0-8), medium scaffolding rehearsals generated a mean affect rating of 5.67, and low scaffolding rehearsals generated a mean affect rating of 5.24.

Challenge and skill ratings were positively correlated with all three subcategories of scaffolding language and were negatively correlated with the non-scaffolding subcategories of I-R-E, logistical procedures, and criticism/coercion (Table 5). Student ratings of affect were positively correlated with all categories of scaffolding language and procedures explaining how

to accomplish a task (instructional procedures). Student ratings of affect were negatively correlated with language giving logistical directions and offering criticism/coercion. As an example of these relationships, the final seventh grade rehearsal of Teacher B included a high level of scaffolding language (48%, half of which was coded as task-focused support), high and closely matched student ratings of challenge (6.24) and skill (6.29) and the highest-recorded student ratings of affect (7.00).

Table 5 Here

Figure 2 shows the positive relationship between the mean levels of scaffolding language, number of complete sequential units and student reports of quality of experience.

Figure 2 Here

### *The Qualitative Data*

The qualitative data collected for this study served to illustrate the context within which the quantitative data was gathered. This section presents descriptions of the observed rehearsals and the comments of teachers about their approach to instructional design.

#### *Rehearsal Format & Classroom Context*

Despite interview statements indicating that their rehearsals varied greatly in response to student needs, rehearsals led by Teachers A and B were remarkably consistent in their structure, with exact repetition frequent in vocalizes and warm-up procedures. The repertoire sung by each teacher's ensembles did not vary. Both choirs taught by Teacher A sang identical repertoire (songs by the Beatles and Bob Dylan, a song from the musical "Rent," and a spiritual). Teacher B's two choirs sang different selections drawn from the same four genres (a spiritual, a

contemporary piece in Latin, a contemporary ballad, and a patriotic song). Repertoire choice did not appear to be a factor in the results of this study.

Teacher A's rehearsals did not vary in either overall design or presentation of content. The repertoire segments of Teacher B's rehearsals were different for each observed rehearsal, with musical concepts and problem areas addressed during individual rehearsals rather than extended through a series of rehearsals. This virtually guaranteed that each rehearsal ended with students singing something in which they had gained some mastery. Both teachers indicated that they hoped each rehearsal would end by singing a piece that could be "performed well," but only Teacher B accomplished this goal. Performance ensembles were the only music classes offered at these middle schools. In order to address non-performance curricular goals, both teachers intermittently incorporated activities such as listening to recordings of choral music, the presentation and critique of student compositions, and reading from textbooks about music history. These always occurred toward the end of the class session, after the rehearsal of choral repertoire had been completed.

The teachers' statements about concluding each rehearsal with a successful demonstration of student progress prompted a secondary analysis of the videotapes according to three types of rehearsal formats previously identified by Cox (1989). The repertoire sections of each videotaped rehearsal were analyzed to determine their structure; nine of the 20 rehearsals (45%) corresponded to one of the designs noted by Cox; the most frequent ( $n = 6$ ) was the continuous alternation between familiar and unfamiliar repertoire (ABACA form). The ABACA form was used in approximately 40% of the high and medium scaffolding rehearsals (Table 6). There was no discernable pattern between rehearsal design, complete sequential units, or quality of student experience.

Table 6 Here

Teacher A indicated that her rehearsal plans often included small group work, but all of her observed instruction occurred within a whole-group setting. She also stated that while she invited students to stay after school for individual help, she was unable to provide individual attention during whole-group rehearsals. The rehearsals of Teacher B included multiple varieties of grouping within each rehearsal, and often included several different groupings within each rehearsal segment. Each rehearsal of Teacher B included a minimum of four changes in student groupings, with several rehearsals (all in eighth grade) exhibiting eight grouping changes. Small group work often centered on the sight-reading of a cappella SATB repertoire, and was frequently structured around a goal such as a time limit. These periods of student-led small group work offered opportunities for Teacher B to interact with individual students or groups as needed. The use of multiple groupings during instruction was observed in those rehearsals characterized by both high scaffolding language and high student ratings of challenge and skill (flow). Rehearsals that did not vary from whole-group instruction ranked low in scaffolding language use and produced composite student experiences of boredom and apathy. The district supervisor commented that Teacher B's approach "is so comprehensive and thorough; her classes are so rich in content, and then she ties them together in whatever way works best." Conversely, he described Teacher A's style as "let's review measures 1-16 again."

Teacher B remarked that many of her insights about classroom context came as a result of observing other middle school teachers work in classrooms. Speaking about her early career as a middle school music educator, she recalled,

I felt my classroom management skills were lacking. So, I went to observe teachers that were good at classroom management. I observed teachers who were great at working with the changing voice and I learned from them.

Teacher A was encouraged to similarly learn from other model teachers, but she resisted the efforts of the District Supervisor to arrange assistance. Earlier in the year, however, Teacher A did have the opportunity to observe a rehearsal of Teacher B's seventh grade chorus, recalling,

The kids are sight-reading in four parts, one kid on each part, breaking up into groups.

Those are things I want to build upon – how she structures her rehearsals. I was very impressed. The fact that she goes through so much stuff in the first few minutes.

Sometimes I don't get through that much. That's my goal. That she gets to sight reading each day and voice building activities with them every day...I want to do that every day.

I don't have the time to do that with my kids every day because I spend so much time teaching parts. OK. I need to do this! But, the problem is that her kids are those natural singers, and mine are the non-natural singers.

### *Discussion*

It would be an overstatement to suggest that this study of the instructional language of two teachers could be generalized to all teachers of choral music. Indeed, these two teachers were very different, taught very differently, and their students responded very differently. Even in the broadest sense, however, the results are indicative of how the experience of middle school students can be affected by the language patterns employed by their teachers, whether the patterns are chosen consciously or developed without thought.



Three-quarters of the instructional language coded for this study was categorized as non-scaffolding language. When non-scaffolding language was used in rehearsals, students were not directly given the opportunity to make decisions, experiment with technical approaches, or otherwise interact with musical content; students merely responded to teacher commands without taking responsibility for their musicianship. When students were presented with scaffolding language in this study, they answered questions, explored options, made decisions, and searched for alternative approaches to musical problems – all hallmarks of a constructivist approach to education. At first glance, the relative lack of scaffolding language observed in these rehearsals may be disheartening, especially in light of the increasing body of research indicating the benefits of constructivism for learners in general and adolescent learners in particular (Jackson & Davis, 2000). However, these results may point toward a basic difference between whole-group instruction in musical ensembles and other academic settings.

Learning in a choral rehearsal requires the coordination of many disparate intellectual and physical skills at one time, with performance occurring individually and collectively in the same moment. Moreover, the temporal nature of music performance requires that students momentarily suspend the distinction between process and product. Too much self-criticism of skills paralyzes the student's process of making music, while too little awareness of personal contribution interferes with the musical product of the ensemble. The instructional scaffolding observed in this study demonstrates how teachers can lead students toward the discovery and maintenance of a balance between self-awareness and group membership. However, the use of procedural language reminds students to look at the same location on the same page of music, begin and end simultaneously, and maintain constant focus on a variety of stimuli including the printed page, personal vocal technique, the choral sound, and the teacher's voice. It was

therefore not surprising that the largest percentage of language in the choral rehearsals was procedural. This only heightens the importance of the subtleties in scaffolding language highlighted in this project.

The study by Turner, et al. (1998) indicated that teachers who tailored their language to meet the needs of individual students *within* the large group setting use higher levels of scaffolding language than those teachers whose language is predominantly addressed to the group as a whole. Likewise, Teacher B's classes were marked by her ability to focus on individual students in ways that seamlessly continued the group learning process. She used a relatively high percentage of scaffolding language during those interactions. The need for music teachers to provide individualized attention is reinforced by a recent finding that students in middle school choral ensembles differ in their interpretations of teacher praise (Taylor, 1997). Effective middle school choral directors need to use language that concurrently supports the ensemble's musical goals and honors the individual differences of students within that ensemble.

Seventh graders were presented with more scaffolding language and complete sequential units than eighth graders. Nearly half of the sequential units in seventh grade rehearsals included feedback that was specific and related to the task, whereas only one quarter of the sequential units in eighth grade rehearsals were similarly complete. These teachers clearly wanted to prepare students for future experiences in choral music, including those at the high school level, but they used greater amounts of scaffolding language with seventh graders than with eighth graders. This study indicates that the responsibility choral directors may perceive when preparing eighth graders for high school may be counter to the developmental needs of young adolescents. This mismatch between teacher expectations and adolescent needs has been documented in

previous research about students transitioning to and from middle school (e.g. Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Eccles, Midgley, Wigfield, Miller-Buchanan, Reuman, Flanagan & Mac Iver, 1993).

Rehearsals high in scaffolding language generated high student ratings of challenge, skill, and affect. Other studies have found that adolescents report the experience of flow when actively engaged with other students in classroom activities most likely to develop and challenge their skills (e.g. Hektner, Asakawa, Knauth & Henshaw, 2000). In the present study, students reported flow in rehearsals containing multiple student groupings and several changes in instructional activities. This suggests that group work, an important characteristic of constructivist instruction, provides necessary social support and leads toward higher student affect in middle school choral rehearsals.

These findings suggest a relationship between scaffolding language and complete sequential units of instruction: as one increases, so does the other. Nearly half of the scaffolding language observed during the presentation component of complete sequential units was from the subcategory of transfer. Scaffolding language played an important role in the configuration of complete sequential units of instruction, especially when students were given the responsibility for applying their knowledge or skills. The reinforcement components of complete sequential units contained a preponderance of approval statements, supporting previous indications that exemplary junior high choral directors utilize high levels of approval comments (Fiocca, 1989). The data suggests that the employment of complete sequential units may lead to an increase in scaffolding language. Since complete sequential units must, by definition, contain teacher reinforcement that is specific and related to the task, it is difficult to imagine many instances when teachers would not use scaffolding language in their feedback. This supports research

indicating that complete sequential units of instruction are most effective when they include reinforcement statements reflecting details of student work (Yarbrough, Price & Hendel, 1994).

Students in the five anxiety-producing rehearsals reported that the challenges presented in class were higher than their skills. Theoretically, this would not seem to imply a problem, since the pedagogical techniques of instructional scaffolding are often characterized by the introduction of challenges just slightly above the skill level of students. Close examination revealed that these five rehearsals contained the most frequent shifts of instructional focus and student groupings, combined with the lowest percentages of complete sequential units. There simply may be a point at which the number or pacing of instructional activities becomes overwhelming for students. In these rehearsals, teacher failure to complete the sequential units resulted in an overabundance of task presentations and student responses without corresponding feedback. Four of these rehearsals contained moderate levels of scaffolding language, yet even this amount did not counteract the effects of the brisk pacing. Students in these rehearsals sensed a lack of control, and they experienced a collective state of anxiety. The results of this study suggest that an optimal number of shifts in grouping and instructional content within a 40-minute rehearsal may be either four or five, a finding that will need to be supported by additional research.

Even though this study was chiefly concerned with the instructional process rather than its impact on musicianship, there were marked differences in the musicianship displayed by these student ensembles. In the high-scaffolding rehearsals, the teacher's language and behaviors gave no indication that a sub-standard performance would be acceptable as long as students gave it their best effort (low challenge relative to skill). Nor was there the implication that an exemplary performance would result only if students contributed their greatest amount of effort (high

challenge relative to skill). In these classes, there was no distinction between the process of learning and the product of performance; learning was part of performing, and performing was part of learning.

### *Recommendations and Implications*

It is suggested that future researchers of the quality of experience within whole-group settings consider using categories in addition to the four used in this study (see Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, p. 368). Related to these studies might be an investigation of the relationship between teacher beliefs and teacher actions in the classroom. During interviews, these teachers indicated that their instructional methods were informed by their educational philosophies and self-perceptions, while the data often signaled the opposite. Additional investigations are needed to suggest how scaffolding language, complete sequential units of instruction, and/or student experience might be related to student achievement, transition to high school, and lifelong participation in choral music.

This study suggests that choral music educators desiring to effect a constructivist rehearsal environment might explore the use of sequential units of instruction and the employment of scaffolding language. Moreover, music teachers should be encouraged to re-envision the middle school choral rehearsal – dispelling any notion that choruses must be rehearsed in a rigidly organized, large-group formation without opportunities for individual student contributions.

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Table 1

*Distinguishing Characteristics of Scaffolding and Non-Scaffolding Language Categories*

Category	Sub-Category	Definition	Examples
Scaffolding	Negotiation	Adjusting instruction in response to students and guiding them to deeper understanding	Let's break it into pieces... Is that your G? If that's G, then where's your Do?
Scaffolding	Transfer of Responsibility	Supporting the development of strategic thinking; autonomy; holding students accountable for learning	Sing me a G; Break into groups...you're in charge. Explain how you got that.
Scaffolding	Task-Focused Support	Responding to students with feedback directly tied to a musical concept; viewing challenge as desirable; responding positively to errors; commenting on progress; evoking interest and curiosity	That's hard but I know you can do it! Your sight-reading has improved! See what happens if you lift your soft palate this time.
Non-Scaffolding	Initiation-Response-Evaluation (I-R-E)	Asking known-answer questions; evaluating a student response as right or wrong; minimizing student talk through "turn-taking" (could be single utterance I or E)	What note is Do? G? Good; You're just not supporting; You got it...wonderful!
Non-Scaffolding	Procedures - Instructional	Giving directions related to the subject matter without allowing for student response; providing instructions or suggestions about <i>how</i> to do something; modeling behaviors	The soft palate does this... You have to concentrate or you're gonna get messed up! Let me sing it for you...
Non-Scaffolding	Procedures - Logistical	Giving directions about <i>where</i> , <i>what</i> or <i>when</i> to do something; telling students how to think/act	Sing this note. Turn to page 7. "Bumble Bee" and...
Non-Scaffolding	Criticism/Coercion	Superficial, positive or negative comments focusing on aspects other than learning, such as the ease of completion; using threats or negative expectations to gain student compliance	It's 25% of the grade – be there! Come on, it's only an E-flat. You have such a pretty voice!

*Note.* Scaffolding language is defined as language that assists students in the creation of their own knowledge and skills. Non-scaffolding language is defined as language indicating that authority for learning rests with the teacher.

TABLE 2

*Total Percentage of Instructional Language Use by Category*

Language Category	Teacher		Grade		Total
	A	B	7	8	
Scaffolding Total	4.96	40.37	30.99	16.25	24.93
Negotiation	.00	7.67	5.35	2.87	4.33
Transfer	1.80	14.12	11.19	5.26	8.75
Task-Focused Support	3.16	18.57	14.45	8.12	11.85
Non-Scaffolding Total	95.04	59.63	69.01	83.75	75.07
I-R-E	26.83	18.66	22.97	21.15	22.22
Procedures–Inst.	5.07	3.57	5.01	3.11	4.23
Procedures–Log.	60.09	36.70	38.85	58.42	46.90
Criticism/Coercion	4.74	.70	2.17	2.87	2.46

*Note.* 2034 instructional discourse events were coded.

TABLE 3

*Percentage of Instructional Language Use Within Complete Sequential Units*

	Grade 7		Grade 8	
	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher A	Teacher B
1. Task Presentation				
Scaffolding	20.83	67.67	0.00	44.83
Negotiation	0.00	17.29	0.00	17.24
Transfer	20.83	29.32	0.00	18.97
Task-Focused Support	0.00	21.05	0.00	8.62
Non-Scaffolding	79.17	32.33	100.00	55.72
I-R-E	37.50	9.77	33.33	10.35
Procedures-Inst.	25.00	3.76	0.00	3.45
Procedures-Log.	16.67	18.05	62.50	41.38
Criticism-Coercion	0.00	0.75	4.17	0.00
2. Task Reinforcement				
Scaffolding	16.67	46.62	0.00	36.21
Negotiation	0.00	10.53	0.00	3.45
Transfer	0.00	9.02	0.00	10.35
Task-Focused Support	16.67	27.07	0.00	22.41
Non-Scaffolding	83.33	53.38	100.00	63.79
I-R-E	62.50	32.33	75.00	34.48
Procedures-Inst.	12.50	3.01	8.33	6.89
Procedures-Log.	8.33	17.29	16.67	20.69
Criticism-Coercion	0.00	0.75	0.00	1.72

TABLE 4

*Scaffolding Language and Quality of Experience by Rehearsal*

% of Scaffolding Language	Mean ( <i>SD</i> ) Ratings by Rehearsal		Quality of Experience by Rehearsal			
	Challenge	Skill	Apathy	Boredom	Flow	Anxiety
High (33.3% to 50%)	5.49 (.80)	6.69 (.28)	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Medium (5% to 33.2%)	3.76 (1.02)	5.70 (.58)	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%	50.00%
Low (less than 5%)	3.51 (.80)	5.15 (.46)	71.43%	14.29%	0.00%	14.29%

TABLE 5

*Correlation of Affect, Challenge, Skill, and Language Categories*

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Challenge	—	.17**	.29**	.36**	.30**	-.23**	.07	-.28**	-.19**	.22**
2. Skill		—	.15**	.18**	.19**	.02	.05	-.23**	-.11*	.58**
3. Negotiation			—	.71**	.79**	-.49**	-.07	-.71**	-.49**	.20**
4. Transfer				—	.69**	-.48**	.17**	-.75**	-.58**	.23**
5. Task-Focused Supp.					—	-.29**	-.07	-.83**	-.59**	.25**
6. I-R-E						—	.01	-.01	.22**	-.03
7. Procedures-Inst.							—	-.25**	.05	.13**
8. Procedures-Log.								—	.42**	-.28**
9. Criticism/Coercion									—	-.17**
10. Affect										—

*Note.* \*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

TABLE 6

*Level of Scaffolding Language and Rehearsal Designs*

Rehearsals	Percentage of Rehearsal Design Use			
	Design A “ABA”	Design B “Golden Proportion”	Design C “ABACA”	Other
High Scaffolding	0.00	20.00	40.00	40.00
Medium Scaffolding	12.50	0.00	37.50	50.00
Low Scaffolding	14.29	0.00	14.29	71.14

*Note.* Rehearsal designs defined by Cox (1989)

Figure 1  
Correlation of Instructional Discourse Types

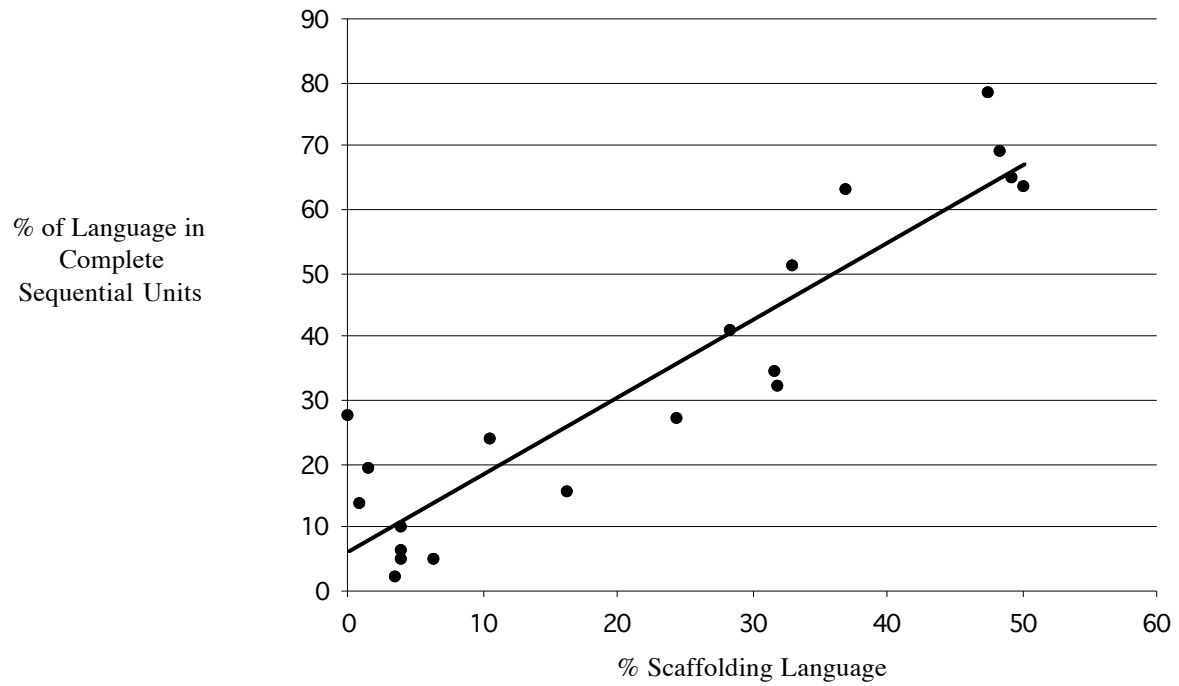
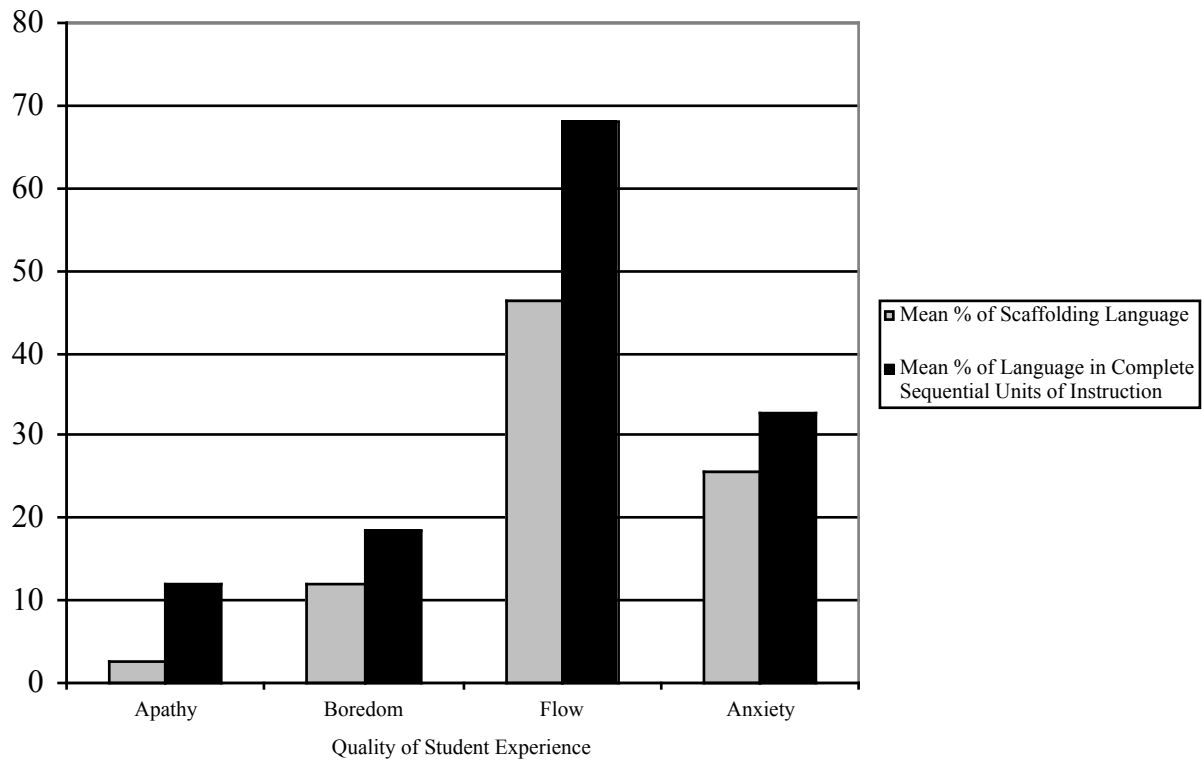


Figure 2  
Relationship of Scaffolding Language, Complete Sequential  
Units





## Appendix A

## STUDENT RESPONSE LOG

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Check One: \_\_\_\_\_ I'm a girl \_\_\_\_\_ I'm a boy

Think about the rehearsal that just ended.

Describe your feelings about today's rehearsal by circling one word in each row:

- *The larger the word, the more you felt that way.*
- *The smaller the word, the less you felt that way.*
- *If you didn't experience either feeling, circle "neither."*

Remember: Circle only ONE word in each row.

Alert	Alert	Alert	Alert	neither	Sleepy	Sleepy	Sleepy	Sleepy
-------	-------	-------	-------	---------	--------	--------	--------	--------

Happy	Happy	Happy	Happy	neither	Sad	Sad	Sad	Sad
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Cheerful	Cheerful	Cheerful	Cheerful	neither	Crabby	Crabby	Crabby	Crabby
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Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	neither	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak
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Uninvolved	Uninvolved	Uninvolved	Uninvolved	neither	Involved	Involved	Involved	Involved
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Proud	Proud	Proud	Proud	neither	Ashamed	Ashamed	Ashamed	Ashamed
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Part of the group	Part of the group	Part of the group	Part of the group	neither	Lonely	Lonely	Lonely	Lonely
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Excited	Excited	Excited	Excited	neither	Bored	Bored	Bored	Bored
---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	-------	-------	-------	-------

Open	Open	Open	Open	neither	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
------	------	------	------	---------	--------	--------	--------	--------

Clear	Clear	Clear	Clear	neither	Confused	Confused	Confused	Confused
-------	-------	-------	-------	---------	----------	----------	----------	----------

Uptight	Uptight	Uptight	Uptight	neither	Relaxed	Relaxed	Relaxed	Relaxed
---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------

Cooperative	Coop.	Coop.	Coop.	neither	Compet.	Compet.	Compet.	Competitive
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1. Do you wish you had been doing something else besides coming to chorus today? (circle)
- not at all                      somewhat                      quite                      very much

2. How challenging was today's rehearsal?	<i>not very challenging</i>				<i>average</i>				<i>very challenging</i>	
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

3. How were your skills in today's rehearsal?	<i>low skills</i>				<i>average skills</i>				<i>high skills</i>	
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

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*Note.* This student response log is based on the form used by Turner and Meyer (1998), whose format was in turn adapted from the Experience Sampling Form of Csikszentmihalyi & Larson (1987).